MAKING SAFETY NETS MORE EFFICIENT

Safety nets are growing in Africa as a means of buffering against economic shocks and providing a ladder out of poverty. RSR has helped six countries review their nascent safety net programs to ensure that the schemes are effective, affordable and anchored in policy frameworks for better coordination, continuity and wider reach.

CHALLENGE

When the dry season arrives or crises hit, the primary response in many African countries often comes in the form of public works and school feeding programs. These types of programs can help those who are productive and in school, but they fail to address the needs of those most at risk, such as, young children, out-of-school children and adults who are unable to work.

To reach and improve the lives of the most vulnerable, many African countries are in the process of piloting or launching cash transfer programs. These regular and predictable transfers of small sums of money increase the access to and utilization of health care and education, improve children’s nutrition and smooth households’ consumption.

APPROACH

With support from RSR, task teams from the World Bank have helped review ongoing and planned safety net programs, including cash transfer programs, in six countries. Recommendations have been developed on how these programs can best be implemented as part of national protection strategies and more efficiently support the extreme poor. Some countries, such as, Mali and Tanzania, have already developed such policy frameworks. Others like, Benin, Lesotho and Zambia, are still in the process.

RSR also supported the development of a regional report that pulled together findings of safety nets reviews in 22 African countries (including the six supported by RSR). Analyzing the objectives, features, performance and financing of the programs, the report provides insights on what drives safety nets development in different contexts and challenges associated with establishing safety nets in Africa.

The participatory review process helped the respective governments to better see where they stand and what options they have for building the most appropriate social protection system. In certain cases, the study offered an opportunity to engage with the government on social protection issues for the first time.
ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RESULTS

**RSR-supported Review of Social Safety Nets**

- Angola—helped consolidate the country’s first policy dialogue on social protection, resulting in a concrete work plan to develop operational tools (targeting mechanisms, registry of beneficiaries, and monitoring and evaluation)

- Benin—aided design of safety net pilot, comprising the first component of a 12-year policy loan

- Tanzania—The safety net review was used as a best practice example and guided subsequent similar reviews in other countries.

**RSR-supported Review of Cash Transfer Programs**

- Mali—feasibility assessment of cash transfer program informed the design of an IDA-supported safety net operation

**RSR-supported Dialogue on Social Protection**

- Lesotho—offered an opportunity to engage with government on social protection issues, resulting in continued technical assistance to the government’s effort to set up a national information system for social assistance. The review has already informed the design of a social protection component of the recently approved Development Policy Credit and a forthcoming Social Protection Strategy.

- Zambia—RSR-supported review facilitated dialogue on social protection between government and development partners, and findings expected to inform social protection intervention for FY13

- Regional—helped develop regional briefing note “Readiness of Safety Nets to Respond to Drought in the Horn of Africa,” including status of safety net development in most of Sub-Saharan countries

- Regional—helped develop the report: “Social Safety Nets in Africa—A Review of Experiences in 22 Countries”